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General and complete disarmament

Letter dated 15 September 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, I would like to acknowledge your letter of 20 July 2010, inviting him to participate in the High-level Meeting on Revitalizing the Work of the Conference on Disarmament and Taking Forward Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations, to be held in New York on 24 September 2010.

We share your view that disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects are essential to promote international peace and security. We believe that durable peace can only be achieved if disarmament is pursued on the basis of the principle of undiminished and equal security for all.

We also believe that global peace and security hinges upon stability in different regions of the world. A durable peace can only be achieved once conflicts and disputes are resolved through dialogue. This has been our constant endeavour in our region.

We also share your view that "global concern has deepened as the Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked". Pakistan, as a responsible nuclear weapon State, is ready to work with you and the international community to break the impasse in the Conference. In our opinion, there are three reasons for this impasse.

The first is that the noble words that have been uttered, at the highest levels, about arms control and disarmament, have not been translated into deeds. If that had been done, the Conference would have made meaningful progress on its core agenda item, nuclear disarmament. But there has been no action in the Conference to implement this commitment by the major nuclear powers.

The second reason for the stalemate in the Conference is the pursuit of discriminatory policies by some States in the field of nuclear collaboration, in flagrant violation of the international non-proliferation regime and their own international commitments, to the detriment of the security interests of affected States.

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The third factor is the refusal of some States to recognize the reality that arms control and disarmament measures can only be concluded by taking into account the security interests of all States and on the basis of the principle of undiminished and equal security for all.

The Conference has been able to deliver and produce disarmament treaties in the past. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with it as an institution. It is the global environment within which the Conference operates that needs to be addressed.

The raison d'être of the Conference is to negotiate comprehensive nuclear disarmament. The Group of 21, to which Pakistan belongs and which comprises 35 members, representing more than 50 per cent of the membership of the Conference, attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament. The Group, in its statement regarding the upcoming meeting, delivered on 7 September 2010 in the Conference, has reaffirmed that nuclear disarmament remained its highest priority. The Group also reiterated its call on the Conference to agree on establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as soon as possible.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole negotiating forum on important international security issues, has a broad agenda and a comprehensive purpose. All issues on its agenda need to be addressed equitably and in a balanced manner, taking into account the security interests of all States. It would be counterproductive to keep the Conference hostage to the fissile material cut-off treaty issue alone.

Pakistan considers that the meeting on 24 September could provide an opportunity to demonstrate political support for the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the multilateral disarmament agenda and other United Nations disarmament bodies.

We would like to convey the following key considerations for reflection in the substantive outcome of the meeting:

(a) The work of the Conference, and indeed of the entire international disarmament machinery, can proceed only on the basis of ensuring security of all States. Any initiative that undermines the security of a State will not succeed;

(b) The agenda of the Conference covers a number of critical issues and all issues need to be treated in an equal and balanced manner. There can be no preferential treatment to any one issue to the exclusion of other agenda items;

(c) Unfortunately, some States are willing to negotiate a treaty on only one issue while other core issues on the agenda of the Conference are being excluded or relegated to mere discussions;

(d) Lack of progress on one issue due to the security concerns of certain States should not lead to an impasse in the Conference, as other issues on its agenda can and should be taken up for consideration, especially since these have been on the agenda since its creation;

(e) The impasse is attributable not to the rules of procedure or working methods of the Conference, but to the security concerns of certain States. Accordingly, these security concerns need to be addressed in order to facilitate the work of the Conference;

(f) Any attempt to amend the rules of procedure, especially the rule of consensus, would unravel the Conference and gravely harm the global disarmament machinery;

(g) While the meeting on 24 September meeting could provide a useful platform for discussions, substantive efforts to revitalize the Conference and take forward multilateral disarmament measures would be better served by convening a fourth special session on disarmament at an early date.

It is requested that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 97.

(*Signed*) Abdullah Hussain **Haroon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative